

# ZeMKI-Forschungskolloquium

## ZeMKI Research Seminar

Linzer Str. 4, Room 60.070, 28359 Bremen, DE

**04.12.2024, 16.15 – 17.45 (CET)**

**Dr. Jens Pohlmann**  
(ZeMKI, University of Bremen)

### **NetzDG on Twitter: A Social Network Analysis of a Crucial Shift in European Digital Policy**

#### **Abstract:**

The European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA) has taken up core elements of an initially very controversially discussed German anti-hate speech law called the Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz (NetzDG). This was done even though the primary discourse about NetzDG was filled with fears of "overblocking" assuming that a law that was intended to reduce hate speech and protect minorities' right to freedom of expression could eventually lead to censorship and thereby threaten democracy. In our research, we examine the discourse about NetzDG on Twitter. We compiled tweets regarding the law via the Twitter API (Tweets: 391.548, Distinct Users/Accounts: 83.229) to conduct a social network analysis that focuses on retweets as indicators of relevance and visibility. This data allows us to explore the connections and interactions between users, to understand how information spreads within the network and its clusters, to identify influential users, and to uncover the overall structure of the online community. Our results show that the German right-wing party AfD, (alternative) online media and specialized IT blogs and websites as well as legal experts play important roles within this public debate about platform regulation and free speech.

#### **Bio:**

Dr. Jens Pohlmann was a research associate at ZeMKI from 2020-2024. He received his Ph.D. from Stanford University in 2017 and has held visiting positions at CAIS, MIT, and the HIIG in Berlin. He will present this collaborative research project together with Dr. Caio Mello (University of London) and Karin León Henneberg (University of Bremen).